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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: DEMOCRACY AND DOUBLE STANDARDS

¶1. Summary: A columnist in "Al-Ittihad" urged Arab governments to use Western countries as examples in bringing liberty upon themselves. A columnist in "Al-Bayan" questioned the US pressure on religious groups and sanctions on their respective countries while at the same time ignoring similar terrorist groups. "Al Bayan" is skeptical about the intentions of U.S. policies directed toward Arab and Muslims. End Summary.

¶2. Under the headline "Towards a Democratic Society", a columnist, Dr. Ahmed Al-Baghdadi, wrote in Abu Dhabi-based Arabic daily "Al-Ittihad," (circulation 65,000)12/27:

"It is clear that American pressure for political reform has yielded fruit despite its slow process, especially in terms of parliamentary elections. This slow development is completely prudent. However, it is important to have a democratic society as well as a democratic government system.. The GCC countries, as an example, still reject many democratic principles, whether in the government or society. They don't have political parties because they fear ethnic and tribal divisions will work against the interests of the country.. Because of Arab's low spirits, American attempts will be in vain. It is true that you will find polling boxes, but they will also be accompanied with poverty, fraud and both overt and covert meddling. A parliament will be formed, yet it will also be held captive by ethnic and secretarian differences leaving us with nothing but oppressive

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governments controlling our movements and liberties.."

13. Under the headline "A restrained democracy", a columnist, Khalid Sayed Ahmed, wrote in Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al Bayan," (circulation 90,000) 12/26:

"Western countries in general and the United States in particular impose huge amounts of pressure and place high demands on the Arab countries to introduce and enforce democratic reforms and expanded political participation.. However we find western countries using rigged rules and double standards on issues and values related to democracy. They want to implement these values on certain countries, while they dictatorially reject implementing them in other countries for reasons that are preposterous.. This triggers the following question: Why the aggressive and prejudiced standpoint on having " Hamas" participate in legitimate elections? The answer: The United States along with European countries seek to eviscerate legitimacy from any group with a religious background, and stigmatize it with the label of terrorism and violence, putting it under pressure to accept their rules of resisting the occupier with flowers.. It is very obvious that such policies are meant to confine resistance groups of religious orientation whereas similar terrorist groups are seemingly ignored.."

14. Under the headline "Moderation First", Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al Bayan," (circulation 90,000) wrote 12/24:

"There seems to be an element inside the decision-making chambers of Washington and in some of the Western capitals set on targeting Arab and Muslims, making Arab moderates wonder about their situation. In some cases these moderates have been depicted to their countrymen as helpless to make any decisions to maintain their rights and sovereignty. This has provoked extremists to become more extreme. How else can we interpret the recent American decisions regarding Palestine, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, all of which indicate an enmity towards moderation.? The climax of this war against Arab moderation is clearly represented by the latest decisions made by the U.S. Congress against Saudi Arabia and Egypt, especially through Washington's call to take steps towards pressing Riyadh to change its educational curriculum while threatening to terminate its aid in light of the criticism recently directed to Egypt. It seems that Congress has not caught up with the latest developments of reform in both of these countries.. Washington has no choice but to revise its stance so as to not impede the process of reform and losing Arabs with moderate tendencies and aiding extremists and damaging its future ties with Arabs and Muslims."

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